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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5189
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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Ha'aretz quoted sources in PM Ehud Olmert's bureau as saying yesterday that Olmert would like to speed up the negotiations to free Gilad Shalit. Olmert has instructed all those involved to do what is necessary so that the talks can progress as soon as Hamas gives Israel a new list of prisoners it wants released. Ha'aretz quoted security and political sources as adding that after Israel

releases those prisoners involved in the deal, others may also be freed as a gesture of goodwill toward PA President Mahmoud Abbas. Yediot reported that the cabinet is likely to approve the release of "non-dangerous" prisoners in the Gilad Shalit swap -- in a shift from the "blood on their hands" criteria. The Jerusalem Post reported that fears mounted in Israel yesterday that Hamas would toughen its stance in response to the cabinet's decision to approve the prisoner-swap deal with Hizbullah.

Media reported that Israel and Syria will hold their third round of indirect negotiations in Istanbul today. Ha'aretz quoted a senior GOI official as saying yesterday that senior Syrian officials claim that "they will not agree to hold direct talks until they receive a firm guarantee of deep American involvement in the talks." Ha'aretz reported that last week Israeli officials met with Arab and European diplomats who had been updated on the details of the negotiations by the Syrian government. According to information passed in last week's discussions, Syria feels that all the previous rounds of talks dealt mostly with technical issues and the framework of the negotiations -- not the heart of the issues. The foreign diplomats emphasized that "there is a feeling that the Syrians are delaying until the new U.S. administration takes office." The Jerusalem Post quoted diplomatic officials as saying yesterday that a meeting between Olmert and Syrian President Bashar Assad in late July is unlikely.

Leading media reported that yesterday the Knesset approved the referendum law, which mandates a national referendum or a two-thirds Knesset majority prior to any withdrawal from territory under Israeli control. The law was approved in its first reading by a majority of 65 MKs to 18 and is meant to prevent withdrawal from the Golan. The media reported that yesterday the Knesset passed the final stages of a law aimed at preventing those visiting Qenemy statesQ (Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia) from running for the Knesset.

Israel Radio reported that Defense Minister Ehud Barak has instructed that the Gaza crossings not be opened today, following the firing of a Qassam rocket at Israel yesterday. Leading media reported that Egypt will open the Rafah crossing today for humanitarian reasons -- without Israel's consent. The Jerusalem Post quoted EU defense official Lt. Gen. Pietro Pistolese as saying that this was only a temporary move, and did not represent the reopening of the crossing.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel has informed Hamas it will fire "warning shots" at Palestinians who enter an area west of the Gaza Strip border fence, extending for several hundred meters. Egyptian officials told Hamas of the new procedure, which is expected to raise tensions between the two sides. Ha'aretz reported that more extremist groups than Hamas are consolidating in Gaza.

Major media reported that Ofer Dekel, the Israeli official responsible for negotiating for the release of Shalit, as well as the two IDF soldiers held by Hizbullah, is expected to travel to Germany this week in order to conclude the final arrangements for the prisoner swap with the Lebanese Shi'ite group. Maariv reported that yesterday the families of 12 Iranian Jews who disappeared during attempts to immigrate to Israel between 1994 and 1997 petitioned the High Court of Justice against the deal.

The media reported on a visit to Israel by Adm. Michael Mullen, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, to discuss Iran and other regional issues. Electronic media quoted ABC News that cited the belief of senior defense officials in Washington that Israel may attack Iran's nuclear facilities before the end of the year. A top Pentagon official was quoted in the report as saying there is an "increasing likelihood" that Israel will carry out an attack, leaving Washington concerned that Iran would strike both the United States and Israel in retaliation.

The media reported that Shmuel Levi, a former campaign manager for Labor Chair Ehud Barak, met with police investigators yesterday to give them what he describes as incriminating evidence against the politician, which pertains to donations Barak received for his 1999 campaign for the premiership. Maariv quoted a source conversant with the so-called "affair of the nonprofit associations," which was investigated years ago, assaying that the timing of Levy's actions

is strange. Israel Radio noted that Levy is an associate of Tal Zilberstein, a senior PR consultant who defected from Barak's camp to Olmert's and threatened Barak a few weeks ago.

Ha'aretz reported that the Jewish Agency presented the Prime Minister's Office with a report a few days ago showing that all the Falash Mura -- Ethiopians whose Jewish ancestors converted to Christianity -- deemed eligible for immigration in 1999 have either arrived in Israel or have been declared ineligible by the Interior Ministry. About 2,000 people on the 1999 list were never checked for eligibility because no request was made to bring them to Israel.

Leading media quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman in Jerusalem as saying that the ministry had no knowledge of the case of the Iranian man who was sentenced to death by a Tehran court on charges of spying for Israel.

Major media quoted visiting Massachusetts Democratic Senator John Kerry as saying that Barack Obama is a "100% supporter of Israel," and that if elected, he will bring new spirit to peacemaking efforts.

The media reported that yesterday Labor MK Danny Yatom, a former Mossad director, announced his resignation from the Knesset, saying that he started losing his trust in Olmert during the Second Lebanon War. He will be replaced by Russian immigrant activist Leon Litinsky.

Yediot reported that Israeli and Syrian human rights groups cooperated to free a Russian woman who was forced to engage in prostitution in Syria.

Ha'aretz reported that its journalist Yossi Melman received an award from the (American) Investigative Reporters and Editors association (IRE), for his report on a Palestinian-Jordanian who was held illegally by American, Israeli, and Jordanian security services.

Leading media reported that Israeli authorities are alert to minor tremors in southern Lebanon, which might presage an earthquake in northern Israel. The Jerusalem Post cited a report published by the NGO B'Tselem that Palestinians living in the northern West Bank drink one-third of the per capita water consumption recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Mideast:

Summary:

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "What bogs us down are the cobwebs of lies that we tell ourselves, led first and foremost by our own government."

Gershon Baskin, Co-Director of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "The fulfillment of Palestinian national aspirations is what will enable the ultimate fulfillment of Jewish national aspirations."

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "From the earliest stages of Israel's war with Hizbullah two years ago, [Tzipi] Livni preached defeatism.... The nation can scarcely afford to be led by another weak-kneed sheep."

Block Quotes:

I. "The Lies We Tell Ourselves"

Chief Economic Editor Sever Plotker opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (7/1): "What bogs us down are the cobwebs of lies that we tell ourselves, led first and foremost by our own government.... The brambles of self-deception have become particularly thick lately. We elevated our willingness to carry out an exchange deal ... to a level of ethical loftiness, of exemplary behavior that reflects the fact that we are the Chosen People, a community with a degree of social solidarity that is second to none in the world. But anyone who knows anything about the long history of exchange deals involving POWs, kidnapping victims, and bodies knows that the saintly self-image that we've force-fed ourselves in order to prepare the emotional ground for this deal is completely baseless. Anyone who says that we, the Israelis, are different from all other nations by virtue of the fact that we are a 'single family,' a 'single tribe,' and so forth, ought to look objectively at the celebrations that are being prepared for Samir Kuntar in Lebanon. He ought to look and grit his teeth. We lied to ourselves when we said, 'We won't capitulate and we won't reward terrorism.' We knew, after all, that we would reward it.... Hizbullah started the Second Lebanon War and it was defeated in it. Despite that, Israel has been acting ever since the end of the war as if it had been defeated. Our geopolitical situation in the north and the south has worsened dramatically under the reign of the Olmert government. Hizbullah has greatly increased its political-governmental influence over Lebanon, and the Hamas regime in Gaza won Israeli legitimacy. Two developments which, in the long run might or might not turn zealots into statesmen, but which utterly contradict the government's stated goals. To topple Hamas was, evidently, just another mendacious decision by our government."

II. "The Mirror Image of Zionism Is Palestinian Nationalism"

Gershon Baskin, Co-Director of the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (7/1): "Peacemaking is by definition taking risks. Those risks must be assessed on the basis of interests and threat perceptions. The greatest risk to the continuation of the Zionist enterprise today is the possibility that we may not be able to separate ourselves from the occupation of the Palestinian people. There is a timeline on the viability and the feasibility of creating a Palestinian state next to Israel. The future of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel has never before been so inextricably linked to the aspirations of the Palestinian people. The fulfillment of Palestinian national aspirations is what will enable the ultimate fulfillment of Jewish national aspirations. Our security is their security, their security is ours. Time is running out for both of us, but there is still sufficient time to reach an agreement that will save both national movements from mutual destruction."

III. "Livni the Leader, or Livni the Lamb?"

Deputy Managing Editor and right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in The Jerusalem Post (7/1): "On Sunday, [Foreign Minister Tzipi] Livni dutifully followed Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in voting to approve the terrorists-for-dead-hostages deal with Hizbullah. Despite the government's best efforts to put a brave face on the decision, the deal with Hizbullah is arguably the most humiliating step ever taken by a government of Israel.... From the earliest stages of Israel's war with Hizbullah two years ago, Livni preached defeatism.... Over the past three years, Livni has introduced and implemented a new doctrine for Israeli foreign policy. Its central theme is Jewish powerlessness. Livni has expressed this basic guiding notion in every major foreign policy address she has given since late 2005.... Livni is not the first empty shell to be proclaimed by Israel's media as the next great white hope. Others, such as former IDF chief of staff Lt. Gen. (ret.) Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and former Labor party leader Amram Mitzna, have also enjoyed that distinction. After years of media build-up, both men were quickly exposed as followers [i.e. not leaders] once they were actually challenged to lead. It can only be hoped that Livni will be similarly challenged and so exposed before she is propelled to Israel's top spot. The nation can scarcely afford to be led by another weak-kneed sheep."

